

# THE STORY OF JAPANESE TEXTILES

『日本の美しい布』



HOSOO, the long-standing Nishijin textile brand, is pleased to announce the opening of HOSOO GALLERY, a new gallery created to fulfill the mission of presenting textiles as a form of media portraying the history, culture, and future of Japan. Its inaugural exhibit, *The Story Of Japanese Textiles: Beautiful Textiles of Japan*, has been directed by Masataka Hosoo, 12th generation head of the Hosoo family. In this exhibit, he presents a video piece and a collection of textiles gathered during visits to 33 reputable production areas of unique textiles throughout Japan that document the skill and beauty that have withstood the test of time and continue to awe the world today.

The exhibit will feature a series of Japanese textiles collected over the course of four years, focusing on the origin of the craft in the history and terroir of each production area. Composed of a selection from more than 20,000 photographs, the video piece directed by Shiro Takatani and the photography series document the unique production processes of each region.

Through this exhibit, we hope to highlight the connections between the different textiles and to share among a wider audience as a reference for the next generation.

For detailed information on individual exhibits, please refer to your handout.

2 September–14 December 2019

Venue: HOSOO GALLERY

Hosted by: HOSOO Co., Ltd.

Exhibit composition: Takashi Suo

Video direction: Shiro Takatani Video programming: Ken Furudate

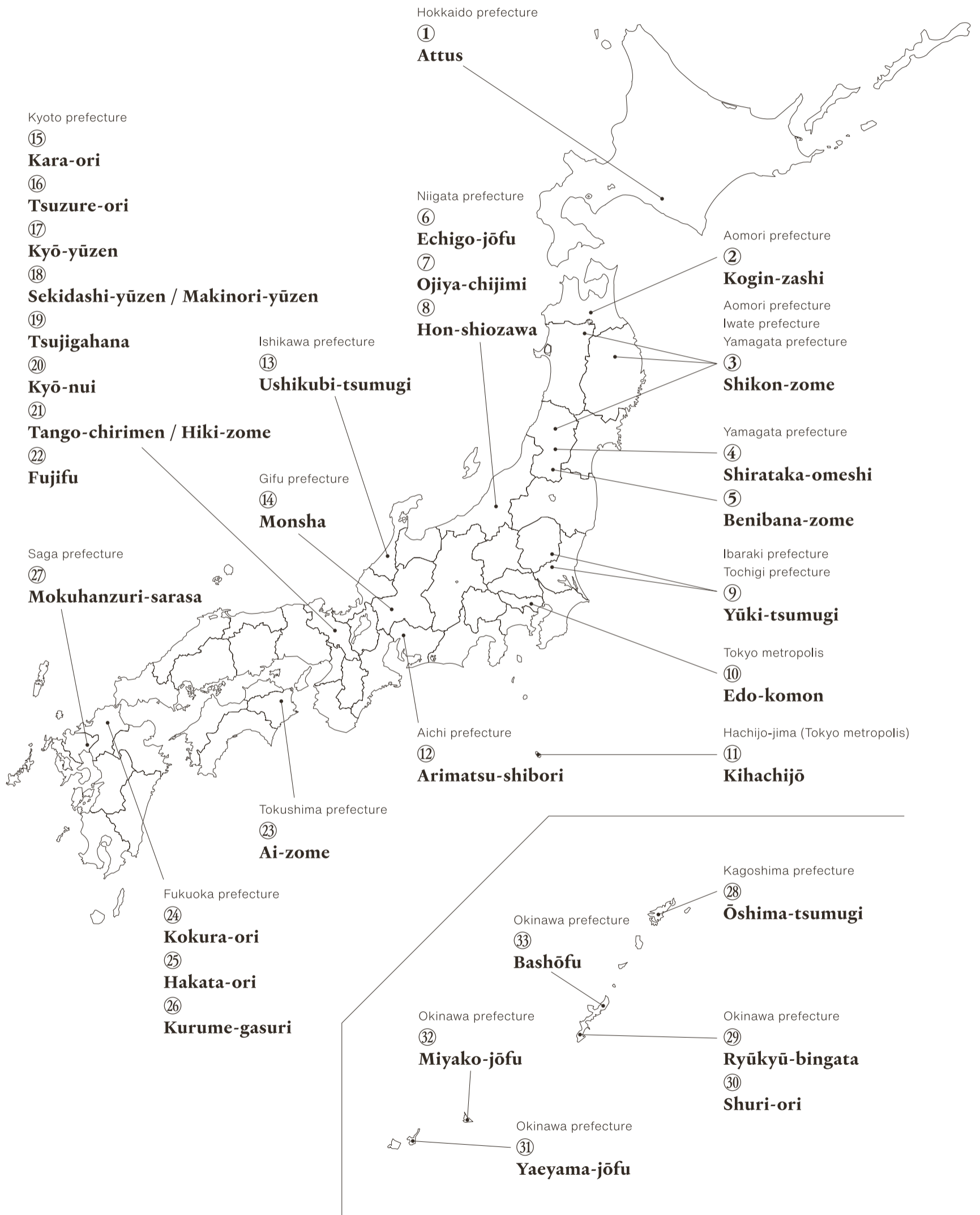
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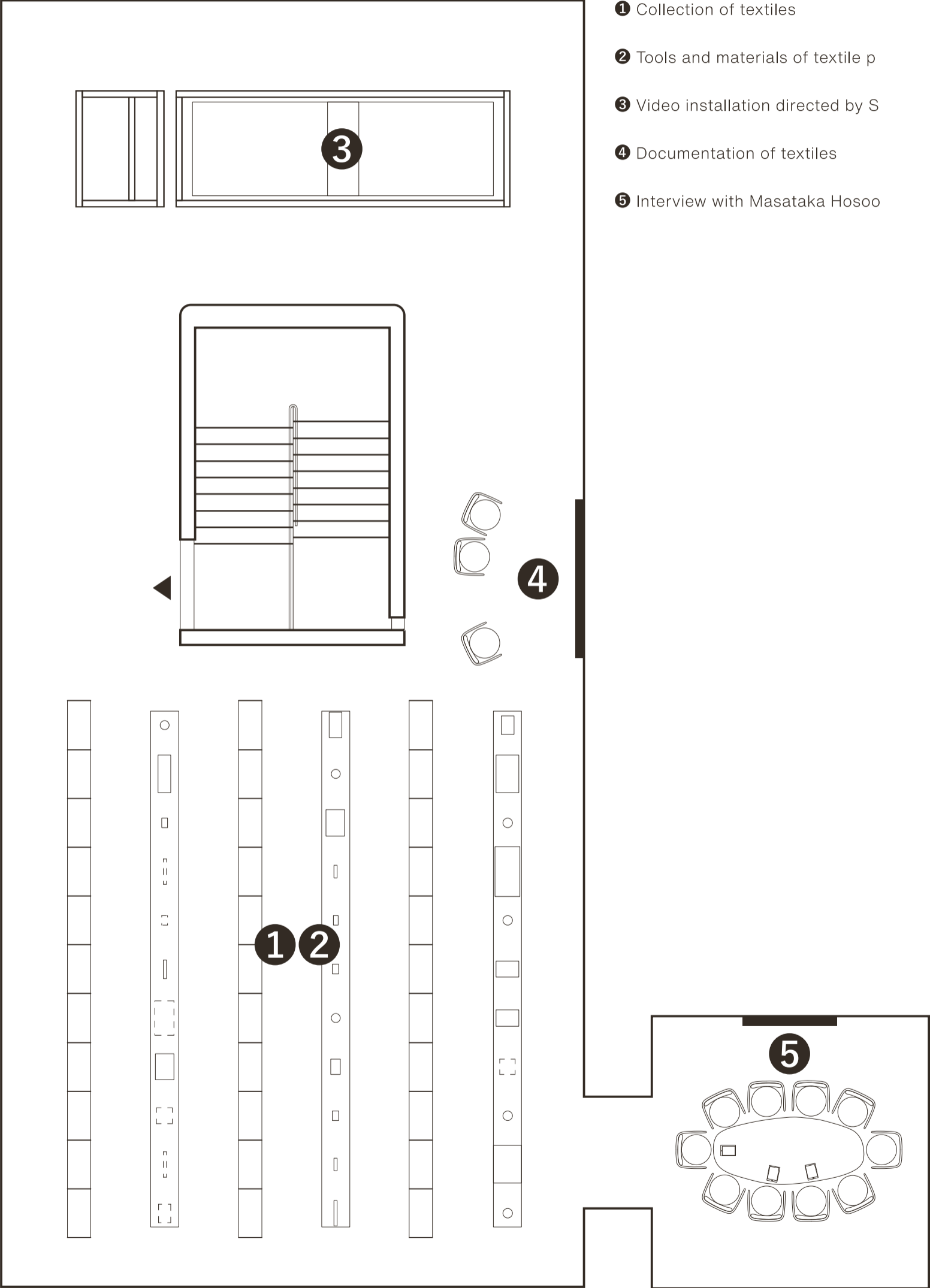
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Direction: Masataka Hosoo Curation: Kumiko Idaka

# List of textiles in the collection



# Floor Map



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- 2 Tools and materials of textile p
- 3 Video installation directed by S
- 4 Documentation of textiles
- 5 Interview with Masataka Hosoo

# Notes for textiles in the collection

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## 1. Attus

Attus is a traditional Ainu textile. The inner bark of the *ohyō* elm is stripped away, softened by soaking in water, and then peeled into even thinner strips. These thin strips are dyed using vegetable dyes, separated with the fingers, and twisted into thread. The fabric is woven using a primitive, frameless loom—called a backstrap loom—in which the ends of the warp are fixed to a pillar or the like with the tension of the threads adjusted using the hips and body. The result is light, durable, and gentle to the touch.

## 2. Kogin-zashi

Kogin-zashi is an embroidery tradition, handed down in the Tsugaru region of Aomori prefecture, in which needle and thread are used to completely cover the cloth. The technique originated as a way to reinforce or repair cloth that had become worn through use, and during the Edo period (1603–1868) was used to provide ramie and hemp cloth with additional protection against the cold. Over time, complicated geometric patterns developed as women’s creativity and ingenuity imbued the technique with a distinctive charm.

Kogin-zashi continues to innovate today, including through the incorporation of contemporary designs.

## 3. Shikon-zome

Shikon-zome, like Ai-zome (indigo dyeing) and Benibana-zome (safflower dyeing), is one of Japan’s three great ancient dyeing traditions. *Murasaki*, the raw material, was already being cultivated as far back as the Asuka period (538–710). The mysterious power of the color purple is suggested by how many civilizations around the world have treated it as a “forbidden color” whose use was restricted only to those of high birth. Shikon-zome uses the dried roots of the *murasakisō* plant, which once grew wild throughout Japan. It was a labor-intensive process, requiring two years for mordanting and then keeping the thread away from sunlight for a few years to fix the color.

## 4. Shirataka-omeshi

The technique of *itajimegasuri* (board-pressed *kasuri*), now found only in the town of Shirataka in southern Yamagata prefecture, is an accumulation of wisdom designed to generate precise, accurate *kasuri* thread designs. 1,400 threads long enough for two rolls of cloth are sandwiched between grooved boards, which are fastened together tightly with nuts and bolts before dye is poured over them continuously for an hour. This makes it possible to dye threads with fine, accurate *kasuri* patterns that would be impossible to achieve when tying the thread by hand. Shirataka-omeshi is woven by alternating this *kasuri* thread with hard-twist thread in the weft, resulting in its distinctive soft *onishibo* wrinkles.

## 5. Benibana-zome

During the Edo period, *benibana* (safflower) was praised as being worth its weight in gold. The process of safflower dyeing begins by turning 200kg of the yellow petals from the flowers that blossom in midsummer into just 200g of *benimochi* (safflower ricecake). During the bitter cold winter, the *benimochi* are kneaded in cold water to remove the easily soluble yellow pigments, and the crimson alone is extracted. Beloved since the days of the ancient Japanese court, *benibana-zome*, the tradition was interrupted during the Meiji period but then revived in Yonezawa where it has been passed down to the present day.

## 6. Echigo-jōfu / 7. Ojiya-chijimi

Echigo-jōfu is an extremely refined fabric from the snowy Hokuriku region, while Ojiya-chijimi is Echigo-jōfu that has been produced with an additional wrinkling step. Ultra-fine thread spun from ramie breaks easily in dryer environments so it could only be woven during the humid winters in snow country. The woven cloth is laid out on the snowy fields on clear mornings in March. During this *yukizarashi* (exposure to the snow), sunlight combined with the ozone emitted by melting snow bleaches the fabric, washing away impurities stuck to the threads and removing the color of the ramie to leave fabric of the purest white.

## 8. Hon-shiozawa

The production of Hon-shiozawa, also known as Shiozawa-omeshi, begins with the manufacture of hard-twist thread subjected to 2,000 revolutions per meter. After being woven with a weft that alternates right-twist and left-twist hard-twist thread, the fabric is kneaded in hot water to remove the sericin and produce pebbly *shibo* wrinkles. This fabric is distinguished by its regularly aligned *shibo* and the elaborate warp-and-weft *kasuri* that emerge from the shadows formed therein. Hon-shiozawa is also known for its lightness and comfort, following the line of the body without clinging to it.

## 9. Yūki-tsumugi

Yūki-tsumugi is produced in a region stretching roughly 20km along the gently winding, clear-watered Kinugawa River. Thanks to the fertile soil brought by the river, sericulture and weaving have flourished in the area since ancient times. Indeed, the name of the river is said to have once used characters meaning “river of silk.” This fabric is woven using silk thread, for both warp and weft, that had been spun carefully by hand using floss from silkworm cocoons disentangled in hot water. Surprisingly light and warm because of its airiness, the fabric gains an even softer texture with every wearing and every washing.

## 10. Edo-komon

Edo-komon looks plain from a distance but reveals fine patterns when seen up close. Originating in samurai families, during the Edo period each daimyo house used its own set pattern exclusively. During the late Edo period, a variation called *ware-komon* with designs containing auspicious images or text came to be made for townspeople. What made Edo-komon possible was the *Ise-katagami* stencils made in the Shirako region of present-day Mie prefecture. These stencils—detailed examples have as many as 11 pinstripes cut away per centimeter—were a critical element that influenced the quality of the resulting Edo-komon fabric.

## 11. Kihachijō

Sericulture flourished on Hachijōjima island as far back as the Heian period (794–1185), and the island presented tribute in the form of *Hachijō-ginu* silk. Kihachijō is a fabric woven from silk thread pre-dyed using the island’s plants, water, and soil. Only three colors are used: “yellow” dyed from *Hachijō kariyasu* (small carpetgrass), “reddish yellow” dyed from the bark of the *madami* (bay) tree, and “black” dyed from the bark of the chinquapin tree and volcanic ash mud. During the early Edo period, Kihachijō was considered a fabric of the highest grade, permitted to be used only by the families of the shogun and daimyo. Its image as a textile of commoners was later cemented when it was worn for merchant daughter roles in kabuki performances.

## 12. Arimatsu-shibori

Arimatsu was founded as an unofficial post station located between Chiryū-juku and Narumi-juku, the 39th and 40th stations on the Tōkaidō road. Its *shibori-zome* (tie-dyeing tradition) is said to have developed as designs for hand towels to be sold to travelers. There are more than a hundred tie-dyeing techniques found around the world, and most of these were also developed in Arimatsu. The three most basic techniques are tying, stitching, and folding. Limitless combinations of these techniques enable the creation of everything from complex geometric patterns to dynamic expressions covering an entire kimono.

### 13. Ushikubi-tsumugi

Ushikubi-tsumugi was developed in a village in the mountains of what is now the city of Hakusan in southern Ishikawa prefecture, and is distinguished by weft using *tamaito* thread drawn by hand directly from 60 *tamamayu* (double cocoons spun by two worms) at a time. Floss drawn from *tamamayu* is more tangled, more irregular and knotted, than that drawn from cocoons spun by single worms, giving it an energetic texture. Since the floss is drawn directly by hand rather than spun, it retains the deep, distinctive pearly luster of silk thread, gaining even more brilliance through the *ito bataki* “thread beating” step that is unique to Ushikubi-tsumugi.

### 14. Monsha

*Sha* is a kind of fabric in which, after each weft thread is beaten into place, adjacent warp threads are crossed to create gaps in the weave. Monsha combines this *sha-ori* technique with plain weave to create patterns. In addition to the balance between sheer and non-sheer portions, warp threads dyed in five-step gradations also gives the fabric gorgeous color and brightness. The work of National Treasure Yoshinori Tsuchiya is widely known for its artistry and creativity.

### 15. Kara-ori

Since the long-ago Heian period, Nishijin has, under the protection of the ruling class, been at the center of a culture of dyeing and weaving that spares no investment of time, effort, or money. Among the many varieties of Nishijin-ori wovens, Kara-ori is known as the most sumptuous and most intricately worked. Weaving the designs involves using shuttles carrying colorful weft thread, including thread of silver and gold. Against a ground of more muted color, patterns emerge that seem as though they must have been executed in embroidery. Kara-ori is a gorgeous fabric that is also used for Noh costumes.

### 16. Tsuzure-ori

While *Kara-ori* has a layered structure, *Tsuzure-ori* is made up of a single layer and distinguished by the liberal use of colorful threads to create designs with a painterly freedom of expression. Using weft threads like paint, lines are added as if with the stroke of a brush. When weaving the patterned sections in *Tsuzure-ori*, the weft threads are not struck with a reed but quietly moved into place using a boxwood comb or the fingernails. As a result, the workshop lack the distinctive sound of machinery, with the sound of comb handles stroking warp threads resounding instead like the tuning of a stringed instrument.

### 17. Kyō-yūzen

Kyō-yūzen represents the pinnacle of kimono dyeing, perfect for kimono worn for life’s special occasions, whether long-sleeved *furisode*, formal *tomisode*, or semi-formal *hōmongi*. Established in Kyoto during the middle Edo period, the technique underwent numerous subsequent innovations as it reached the most elegant and graceful of aesthetic heights. Under the direction of a master dyer, the traditional division of labor among those who handle steps such as designing the pattern, tracing the pattern, applying paste resist to contour lines, covering the pattern with paste resist, or applying color with palette and brush is still maintained today. This specialization has elevated the skill at each step to its utmost, and makes possible the finest quality results.

### 18. Sekidashi-yūzen / Makinori-yūzen

Sekidashi-yūzen and Makinori-yūzen use paste resist to draw the designs. These techniques reverse traditional Kyō-yūzen in which thread-thin lines of paste resist are used to draw the contour lines of patterns that are then vividly painted in with dye. By first covering the areas that are to remain white with paste resist using techniques such as *sekidashi* (outside the lines) or *makinori* (scattered resist), and then boldly dyeing the entire fabric using techniques such as *bokashi* gradation, the restrained shades of color that result cause the beauty of the un-dyed white fabric to emerge. This alternative *yūzen* technique uses white space as part of the design for gorgeous coloration that is filled with tension.

### 19. Tsujigahana

Tsujigahana was once known as a mystery dyeing technique. Enjoying its prime during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573–1598), the technique disappeared after only about 100 years before being revived after the Second World War by dedicated master dyers. The contour lines of a design drawn on white cloth are sewn and bound with thread and the fabric is dipped in liquid dye, with this *shibori* process redone for each color to bring out the design. Contemporary Tsujigahana is distinguished by the softness of its contour lines, its vivid *sumigaki* inked accents, and the three-dimensional texture left by its *shibori*.

### 20. Kyō-nui

Kyō-nui is an ancient Japanese embroidery craft. The embroidery culture that arrived from the continent during the Asuka period (592–710) was refined to suit the aesthetic of the capital and developed into Kyō-nui. Layers of ultrafine thread form complex painting-like patterns that are accentuated by the elegant shimmer of the gold, silver, and colored thread. Adjusting the twist of the thread makes possible a range of expression from a gorgeous gloss to a muted sheen. This technique is used for the *nuibaku* Noh costume.

### 21. Tango-chirimen / Hikizome

Roughly 70% of the white cloth used for kimono is produced in Tango. In the autumn, moist winds blowing in from the northwest across the Sea of Japan bring the area a moderate humidity. The history of Tango-chirimen began when secret techniques from Nishijin were brought to the area about 300 years ago. Chirimen woven with hard-twist thread to produce *shibo* wrinkles is distinguished by the fundamental beauty of silk thread as a material. The masterful application of the most basic dyeing technique, *hikizome* (bruhs-dyeing), breathes the vitality of the kimono into this white cloth.

### 22. Fujifu

Natural cloth is cloth that has been woven of fiber taken from the bark or stalks of natural vegetation such as ramie, hemp, plantain, and vines. Fujifu is a type of natural cloth that has been handed down on the Tango peninsula in northern Kyoto. Wisteria branches cut in the mountains are beaten, stripped, and boiled to remove fibers that are spun into thread and woven into cloth. Fujifu has thick fibers and gets stronger when wet. With a softness that reveals the pliability of a vine and a bark texture and color that brims with rustic atmosphere, the fabric urges the imagination toward clothing’s origins.

### 23. Ai-zome

Ai-zome has been passed down by master dyers for generations along the Yoshino River basin in Tokushima Prefecture. Fertile soil brought by flooding of the river and long daylight hours are the reasons *ai* indigo cultivation flourished in the area. Ai-zome dye uses *sukumo*—made of *tadeai* indigo leaves fermented for 100 days—as its main material supplemented by lye and bran and then fermented further. The quality of the *sukumo* influences the success or failure of the fermentation, the volume of indigo contained, and even the beauty of the coloration of the finished product.

### 24. Kokura-ori

In Kokura-ori, the arrangement of colored threads in the warp become stripes in the woven cloth. It was a dominant style for *hakama* cloth used by samurai families during the Edo period. After dying out during the Showa period, it was revived by Noriko Tsuiki in 1984. With a density of 2,300 warp threads over the width of an *obi*, the technique uses cotton thread to achieve the texture and gloss of tanned leather. The striped patterns formed using naturally dyed threads are said to have been inspired by the natural scenery. Brought back to life in the present day, the refinement and artistry of Kokura-ori continue to evolve rapidly.

## 25. Hakata-ori

Hakata-ori cloth boasts incredible durability that belies its supple softness. The secret lies in a warp made up of as many as 15,000 threads and a weaving method that produces an uneven surface. The technique built on a weaving culture brought to Hakata in now Fukuoka Prefecture, then a gateway for overseas trade, from the continent, and was further refined in the samurai culture of Edo. The *kenjōgara* pattern for which Hakata-ori is best known is based on Buddhist implements such as the vajra and a ceremonial flower tray, reflecting its historical origins in weaving techniques brought back to Japan by the attendant to a high priest who traveled to China during the Southern Song dynasty.

## 26. Kurume-gasuri

Kurume-gasuri was woven in the territory of the former Kurume Domain in the Chikugo River basin. Women in the area are said to have established *kasuri-ori* techniques at the end of the Edo period, producing cloth distinguished by its combination of the simple feel of cotton cloth with elaborate *kasuri* (splash) patterns. The perfection of the result was determined by the depth of the indigo, the clarity of the white, and the boundary between them. Natural indigo is less penetrative than chemical dyes, making it difficult to reach to the interior of the fibers. Creating vibrant *kasuri*, therefore, required soaking the thread more than 40 times and the incorporation of wringing and beating steps.

## 27. Mokuhanzuri-sarasa

*Sarasa* is a type of patterned dyeing with roots in ancient India. Japanese *sarasa* was produced throughout Japan in the late Muromachi period (1336–1573). The techniques of Nabeshima-sarasa, which boasted by far the highest quality, were revived during the Showa period by Teruji Suzuta and his son Shigeo. Adding their own ingenuity to an already complex technique by incorporating the use of both woodblocks and paper stencils, they developed Nabeshima-sarasa into their technique Mokuhanzuri-sarasa. The accurate replication of patterns made possible by woodblocks, the arrangement of blank space around the periphery, and dynamic coloring produce an unparalleled beauty.

## 28. Ōshima-tsumugi

Ōshima-tsumugi followed its own evolution mainly on the islands of Amami Ōshima, subtropical and surrounded by coral reefs. The development of a *shimebata* (binding loom) for *kasuri* processing in 1907 based on on-site research at Kurume-gasuri workshops made it possible to create *kasuri* patterns said to be the most detailed in the world. Another characteristic is the full, deep color created by mud dyeing. This is formed due to a reaction between the tannic acid in the leachate from the islands' wild *teichi* trees (*sharinbai* hawthorn) and the iron found in an exposed stratum dating back 1.5 million years.

## 29. Ryūkyū-bingata

Ryūkyū-bingata is the only traditional dyeing technique remaining in Okinawa. The “bin” of *bingata* is a general term for coloring while the “gata” means patterns. The term is believed to refer to stencil dyeing in which patterned stencils are applied to the fabric using rice paste and then brushed with colored dye. In the days of the Ryūkyū Kingdom it was worn by the aristocracy and by samurai families and was also used as costumes for dance during festivals and at ceremonies to welcome foreign guests. Design motifs include the ocean and clouds as well as animals and plants such as birds, flowers, dragons, phoenixes, and butterflies. Patterns that imbue a sense of the wild within the noble seem somehow to reflect the strong sun of southern lands.

## 30. Shuri-ori

During the time of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, Okinawa was home to a varied profusion of dyeing and weaving techniques that evolved and matured in consort with the climate and natural features of the islands. Shuri-ori is a general term for the seven types of weaving that remain in Shuri, which was the center of an elegant, refined weaving culture. Notably, Hanakura-ori, which combines *mon-ori* woven designs with “twisted-weave” *mojiri-ori*, is said to have been permitted to be worn only by the female nobility. The techniques of Shuri-ori were almost completely lost as a result of the Second World War, but were revived through research into cloth from the time of the Ryūkyū Kingdom that were found in Berlin.

## 31. Yaeyama-jōfu

Yaeyama-jōfu, a tradition passed down primarily on the island of Ishigaki, has a history of being offered as a tribute cloth, through the royal court of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, to the Satsuma Domain during the Edo period. Also known as Shiro-jōfu (white fine ramie cloth), Yaeyama-jōfu is dried in the sun after weaving and bleached in seawater, a process that gains it an utterly clear whiteness. The ramie raw material and the vegetation from which the dyes are made all take maximum advantage of the blessings of the islands' sun and sea. The *umizarashi* step of bleaching in seawater is now practiced only for Yaeyama-jōfu.

## 32. Miyako-jōfu

As with Yaeyama-jōfu, Miyako-jōfu was also presented as tribute cloth to the Satsuma Domain. While Yaeyama-jōfu was known as Shiro-jōfu (white fine ramie cloth), Miyako-jōfu was known as Ai-jōfu (indigo fine ramie cloth). Introduction of the *shimebata* (binding loom) from Amami Ōshima during the Taisho period (1912–1925) made minute *kasuri* (splash) patterns possible, and fabric dyed almost black through repeated applications of indigo dye would reveal fine *kasuri* patterns only to the most attentive eyes. As attention has turned in recent years to the Iro-jōfu (colored fine cloth) that was woven for the royal court of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, relaxed and colorful Miyako-jōfu has drawn new interest as well.

## 33. Bashōfu

Bashōfu was revived in the hamlet of Kijoka in northern Okinawa prefecture. Bashōfu has the longest history of Okinawan textiles and has charmed many including Sōetsu Yanagi, founder of the mingei (folk craft) movement. Made from fibers stripped from the *itobashō* (thread banana) plant, a banana relative, bashōfu has a distinctive feel with a trace of the primitive. Producing bashōfu cloth begins with cultivation of the *itobashō* plant; the importance of making the thread is so great that the work of weaving is said to constitute no more than 1% of the entire production process. The soft, light cloth maintains a brisk stiffness that hugs close to the skin without clinging to it and, with a texture that allows the passage of a cool breeze, is ideally suited for the heat and humidity of summer.